

Usage of Herb Medicines in Aruba

Definition of herbal medicine: The art or practice of using herbs or herbal preparation to maintain health and to prevent, alleviate, or cure disease. (2) a plant or plant part or an extract or mixture of these used in the herbal medicine.

Medicinal herbs are plants that are used for medicinal purposes. Medicinal herbs cover a wide range of types of plants. Other types of herbs include culinary herbs used to flavor food, and aromatic herbs, used to add fragrance. Medicinal herbs cover a wide range of types of plants. The parts of the plants used for medicine may be their leaves, flowers, roots, seeds or bark. What puts medicinal herbs together in a category is their use in healing. Plants have been used by humans and animals for medicine for many hundreds of years.

Herbal medicine, also known as herbalism or botanical medicine is a medical system based on the use of plants or plant extracts that may be eaten or applied to the skin. Since ancient times, herbal medicine has been used by many different cultures throughout the world to treat illness and to assist bodily functions.

Today the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of people rely on herbal medicine for some part of their primary health care.

The development of the use of herbs. When we speak of herbs as medicine, many people believe that because our ancestors used them, we are also committed to their usage. But the usage of herbs goes back to many years (centuries) than we believe. The usage of herbs exist since the time that those who lived in the natural habitat No matter how long a period we go back to the time, history tells us that the usage of herbs already existed. If we take for example, the Egyptians and the Greeks, we see that many herbs were at a very high cultural level with them and since then they knew that herbs had a high medicinal value. The Romans used herbs and flowers in various manner. To perfume their rooms, to fill their mattress and pillows, to bathe and medicine.

Definition, name and classification. There are many sources in which you can obtain the explanation of herbs, their names and classifications. In all cases we can say that herbs are plants in which their inside has some kind of substance which have an aromatic fragrance and their usage for medicine. Therefore, either it is a plant or a tree, they all fall under herbs. If you see how many trees are around you, you will wonder how you are going to distinguish them from one another. Yet to classify them and which one to use as medicine. To answer this, we can say that nature itself took care of a system so that we can recognize and classify them. For many centuries scientists have tried to get a system to recognize and classify them. The immense work they did, made it easy for us. Nowadays each plant has its name and classification. Names are available in almost all kinds of languages and some have

more than one name. You can also find several plants with the same name. This makes it difficult because if you have not studied biology or lived in a natural habitat, it would be difficult to recognize and distinguish herbs from another. It is therefore advisable if someone wishes to make use of herbs, learn how to recognize it, since there are herbs to cure, there are also poisonous which can lead to a very dangerous result with its usage. It is recommended that if you don't have the knowledge of herbs, ask the elderly for help. The best time to pick herbs is during the day because it is said that at night the plant is asleep, while during the day the sun keeps the substances activated. The belief is to always use an uneven number of branches in the usage.

Herb medicine has been used since the Prehistoric time when the first immigrants, the Caiquetio Indians arrived in Aruba in the 12th century. Later our great grandparents continued with this process of using a lot of branches to make several kinds of medicine.

When we speak of herb medicine, some people would ask how and why? In Aruba in the old days there weren't any doctors, pharmacy or medicine available, so they had to look for other sources to get medicine for the families. Before our first doctors, Dr. Horacio E. Oduber and Dr. George Hopkins arrived in the early 20th century, mid-wives, healers/witch doctors used to attend the patient. The first mid-wife in Savaneta, Rosafina (Ma Finchi) Schwengle used to assist in the delivery of many babies. One of the most famous healers in Aruba in the fifties was Mrs. Maria Dominica Roza Giel, better known as Mamona who lived in Noord. People from all over the island, no matter the distance, used to go see Mamona to get cured. Some of the others were: David Geerman (Buchi Dafu), Pedro Briceño, Luisa Ras, and Josefina Lamper-Peña.

Healers (Curanderos) are found practically all over the world and Aruba is not an exception. The healer dedicates his/her life to the administration of remedies for mental, emotional, physical and spiritual illnesses based on their evaluation. The role of a healer can also incorporate the roles of a psychiatrist along with that of doctor and healer. They use simple herbs, water and even mud to effect their cures. Others additionally employ Catholic elements such as holy water and saint pictures.

When the doctors arrived in Aruba, it took some time to reach to the doctor because there were no transportation available in those days. Many had to go by foot or by donkey. When a child got sick and the father is working in the farm or fishing, the mother could not leave the children go to school. They had to stay home to take care of the others because they could not stay home alone. The same goes for an elderly who gets ill and cannot help him/herself. Depending more or less what the illness is, the mother would go around the house or farm and look for plant branches/roots needed to boil to give to the one who is ill. With herb medicine all the problems were solved.

When an elderly gets ill, many times he/she cannot walk, how does he/she gets to a doctor. Then the family has to take care of him/her with the herb medicine. Many people were using herb medicine without any harm. Our elderly used these medicines and in the long we did also. Doctors don't like your using herb medicine, but we continue to use them. Nowadays this has changed a little. They are very useful and they are free. On the contrary, in the old days in Aruba, when you visit a doctor, you have to pay instantly for the service. When you go to the pharmacy, if you don't have the cash, you don't get the medicine. In Aruba, this is a more lenient situation nowadays since we have the General Medical Insurance (AZV).

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